

narrative, to elucidate from time to time the political situation, and to illustrate social facts. There remains the question of its employment as a source for social history. How far is its evidence valid for that purpose? In his third chapter Macaulay draws upon it to prove general propositions about the character of particular classes of men. His notion of the country gentlemen of the time of James II, for instance, is in part based, as he states in a note, on 'the lighter literature of that age', and anyone who reads It can see how much that notion was influenced by their representation on the stage.¹ The same thing holds good with the description of the country clergy, which follows that of the country gentlemen. Here, too, his conception of their position and his account of their character is largely influenced by the lighter literature and especially by the drama. One of the points he undertakes to show is that the clergy 'were regarded as, on the whole, a plebeian class'.^s One of his arguments is that 'a waiting woman was generally considered as the most suitable helpmate for a parson.'³ During the several generations accordingly the relation between divines and handmaidens was a theme for endless jest; nor would it be easy to find, in the comedy of the seventeenth century, a single instance of a clergyman who wins a spouse above the

rank of a
 cook/ In a note, he adds ' Roger and Abigail in
 Fletcher's
 Scornful Lady, Bull and the Nurse in
 Vanbrugh's Re-
 lapse, Smirk and Susan in Shadwell's
 Lancashire Witches,
 are instances/ ⁴

It is well known that Macaulay's characters
 of these
 country men and the clergy have been
 attacked, partly as
 untrue, and partly on the ground that he
 relied too much

*I, 313, n. (iii).

»I, 316 (iii).

«I, 315 (iii).

<!, 318 (iii).